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ABSTRACT

The Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce and State Technical Institute (STI) at Memphis (Tennessee) developed a cooperative program to meet the educational needs of the community. A jointly staffed College/Chamber office was created in May 1986 to staff the education department of the Chamber, to assist the economic development department with education and training information for business prospects, and to act as a resource for the business community. At the same time, the Chamber and STI created a supervisory institute to provide classes on management and supervision for area employees. The institute has been highly successful, with all classes filled. In October 1986, a Technical Scholarship Program was begun as a joint venture of STI and the Chamber. In June 1987, an Education and Training Council was formed to bring business, education, and community organizations together to discuss how the business community could become involved in addressing educational issues. Finally, a Quality-Productivity Center was established at the Chamber, again staffed with STI employees. The Chamber and STI work together in the marketing and dissemination of literature for the center, as well as for the supervisory institute and Technical Scholarship Program. The partnership has been beneficial for both STI and the business community, and more efforts are likely. (KC)

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A TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY THROUGH A METROPOLITAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Presented at
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By
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December, 1988

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A TECHNICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY
THROUGH A METROPOLITAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Introduction

The idea of partnership is certainly nothing new. In one form or other the idea of partnership is as old as mankind. The Biblical story of Eve and the serpent is an account of a partnership. Obviously, the purpose, function, length, complexity, and any other dimension along which one may examine partnerships will vary tremendously from situation to situation. The Shaman in a tribal commune may have a relatively simplistic primitive role within his environment while the modern day physician may participate as a highly skilled professional in a rather complex environment.

Partnerships in the business community are relatively common place. They occur at all levels-individual to corporate, and varying degrees between. For example, a company that does extensive international business will be well served to form a

partnership with an international law firm in order to deal with a multitude of potential opportunities. In the educational community, although not as common, partnerships do exist within, between and among institutions of learning. In our community, for example, The University of Tennessee, Memphis, and Memphis State University have developed a Ph.D. program in Biomedical Engineering in which the student progresses through the program by taking courses at both universities. The degree is bestowed by Memphis State, however, a significant portion of the Biomedical course work is conducted at The University of Tennessee by their faculty.

Occasionally a partnership between an entity in the business community and the educational community occurs. Often such partnerships are formed to meet specific goals within a highly structured environment for a given time frame. A food manufacturer, for example, may choose to transition from a traditional manufacturing operation to a high tech robotic operation. To effect an orderly and smooth transition, the company may opt to form a partnership with one or more educational institutions for a designated period

of time. (A similar arrangement does, in fact, exist in our community). In almost any partnership, the extent to which the partnership is a part of the day-to-day operations is primarily a function of the parent organizations' perception of needs and definition of roles. Typically the partnership gives rise to a new thrust that did not exist in either organization prior to the formation of the partnership. This new dimension complements the missions or goals of each organizational partner while permitting each parent member to maintain its own group identity. Each participating partner organization realizes gains in various areas. These gains normally can be expressed more clearly as the "power of 2" vice the "sum of 2." Hence, even in the most structured partnership environments, the climate for substantive thought and action becomes an integral part of the organizational routine.

Alexander Astin in his article on "Competition or Cooperation" in the September/October 1987 issue of Change suggested that "...there are two fundamentally different world educational as well as societal issues. For simplicity, [he characterized them] as the

competitive view and the cooperative view of human nature and of society." (p.14) He continues to say although the "...competitive world view has deep roots in the history of western civilization" (p.14) "...our only hope for the future is a cooperative world view." (p.19)

PRESENTATION

The Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce this year celebrated its 150th anniversary of serving the business community. In 1838, a small group of businessmen joined together to form this non-profit organization. Today about 4,000 businesses, 85% of these classified as "small businesses," invest in Chamber membership for the primary purpose of the economic development of the Memphis area. There is currently more activity than at any time in the past from businesses looking at relocation to Memphis. In the past two years well known firms such as Great Western Financial Corporation, Music Corporation of America, and International Paper Company have moved to Memphis. The Chamber works closely with the city and county mayors in continuing this aggressive bid for new business. In addition to this kind of activity, The

Chamber has to care for its current membership. A variety of services is available through the Business/Industry Services, Governmental Affairs, Membership, Economic Development, Education, and other departments. The overall mission of The Chamber is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens.

Although its mission is much like that of most other community colleges across the nation, State Technical Institute at Memphis is the largest two-year college in Tennessee and the seventh largest educational institution in the state. State Tech is charged with enhancing the quality of life in the community through its varied programs of training and education. The two major divisions of the college are the academic support services area and the student support services area.

State Tech has had a positive presence in the community since 1967, however, the administration believes that The Chamber serves as a forum to define the broad-based educational needs of the community. The College, then, serves to translate these needs into practical educational programs.

The College needed a presence in the community beyond that which had previously been apparent. The logical step was to align this presence with the business community in its own arena. The Chamber long has been involved in providing workshops, forums, seminars, and literature to meet the needs of the membership. The influx of new businesses to the area also began calling attention in a more significant manner to the educational needs these companies presented upon their relocation to Memphis.

The Chamber's Economic Development Department was called on to provide information about education and training programs in the community upon which new business could rely, both for their current employees and family members. Questions also arose about the skills of the available work force.

The heretofore parallel paths of The Chamber and the College began curving toward each other. The CEOs of the College and The Chamber, in their own restructuring efforts, managed to bring the two organizations together in December of 1985, when The Chamber CEO began working with State Tech on a Federal Grant Proposal. There also proved to be strong support

from the grass roots level - the local businesses - for this project.

A decision to hire a key staff member at The Chamber had been made in December, 1984. Although hired to fill a membership manager vacancy, this person was being groomed to assume an educational support role at a future date. The congruence of ideas surrounding the Federal Grant Proposal precipitated a unique recommendation by the College President. In May, 1986, he proposed a jointly staffed College/Chamber office. A formal partnership agreement was signed in October, 1986, by Charles M. Temple, President, State Technical Institute at Memphis, and David W. Cooley, President, Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce. This agreement provided that three (3) State Tech employees, two professionals and a support person, would be housed at The Chamber and would be under the day-to-day supervision of The Chamber President. These people would also staff the Education Department for The Chamber, assist the Economic Development Department with education and training information for business prospects, and would represent, not only State Technical Institute, but the educational programs and

agencies in the area, and act as a resource for the business community.

It may be noted that many of the activities undertaken in the partnership were specifically recommended by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges in their report on the future of two-year colleges. (AACJC, Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century, April, 1988.)

A precedent had been set in Spring, 1986, when the Supervisory Institute was instigated. This was a joint endeavor of State Tech and The Chamber. Classes were held at the College. The marketing was carried out jointly and registration was handled through The Chamber. This Institute is on-going with every class filled each time it is offered. There are now four (4) separate courses in the Institute: Fundamentals of Management and Supervisory Techniques, Advanced Management and Supervisory Techniques, Effective Communications for Managers and Supervisors, and Quality Control for Managers and Supervisors. Those who successfully complete a course receive three (3) semester hours credit. A certificate is also awarded. Plans are to develop two (2) additional courses.

In October, 1986, ground work was laid for the Technical Scholarship Program. Again this was a joint program of the College and Chamber. The member businesses of The Chamber were the first to be informed of the program. In Fall, 1987, the program kicked off with nine (9) area companies selecting fifteen (15) people as participants. The technical scholars work for the company sponsor twenty (20) hours weekly for which they are paid an hourly wage agreed to by all company participants. They receive training in their major field of endeavor. The company sponsor also provides educational costs at State Tech for their selected scholars. The companies train these scholars who are just beginning their educational pursuits at State Tech in their major fields. This also allows the companies to give something back to the community in that they are providing an arena for training the community's greatest resource, its people.

In June, 1987, the concept of the Education and Training Council was advanced by the Chamber's CEO. The idea was to bring business, education, and community organizations together to discuss how the business community could involve itself in addressing

educational issues. A kickoff luncheon for this council followed in September, 1988. The action agenda is still in the planning stages. However, the council has undertaken a project working with a local vocational technical high school. The probability for successful entry into a satisfying and fulfulling career path is increased tremendously for young men and women, when business and education leaders work together to enhance these opportunities. Anne-Marie McCartan stated relative to the Carnegie Council's recommendations on the community colleges' role in working with sixteen to eighteen year olds that "[t]he college... should take on a 'residual responsibility for youth' that would involve being available to all youths in the community in order to 'advise on academic and occupational opportunities'..." (McCartan, Journal of Higher Education, 684)

Quality and productivity are two buzz words which can be heard throughout our nation today. Such gurus of this concept as Deming, Crosby, and Tribus are by-words in many companies incorporating their ideas. In June, 1988, a Quality - Productivity Center was established at the Chamber, again staffed with State

Tech employees. The Chamber and State Tech work hand in hand in the marketing and dissemination of literature for the center, as well as for the Supervisory Institute and Technical Scholarship Program.

Quality Productivity training is usually carried on at the company site for teams of company personnel on various levels of responsibility. Seminars are held for company CEOs to familiarize them with and secure their commitment to the quality concept. As proof of its total immersion in and support of this project, State Tech is training teams of their own employees. Grants have been proposed to fund the Mid-South Quality - Productivity Center, which is really catching on in the community. Again, the CEOs of the College and The Chamber, together with the major business leaders, are active in this endeavor.

Jack Blair, President, Richards Medical Company, leading manufacturer of orthopaedic implant and fracture-repair products, in a recent speech before the Industrial Personnel Council, affirmed that among the changes in the manufacturing environment today are movements toward participative management. The changes

are focusing on the people who make up the company. Blair says this focus will certainly continue into the 21st century. For years American companies have made distinctions between managers and those who are managed. The wheel is now turning toward the realization that the managees can give the best input in their own areas of expertise. The quality productivity team training provides the opportunity for this heretofore "unheard" segment, not only to speak, but to be encouraged to share their knowledge for the good of the company. Who knows the functions and capabilities of a specific machine better than the person who operates it daily? These workers see their position of importance elevated. Thus their involvement and interest levels have risen to a new plateau. Now, their managers, and even the CEO, are eager to listen to their ideas. This far exceeds the outmoded "Suggestion Box."

In "Foundations for Executive Integrity," Srivastva and Barrett list nine propositions "...to foster dialogue, promote diversity, and encourage development..." in organizations of any type. These propositions support the quality productivity thesis.

In their second proposition, for example, they say "[e]xecutive integrity exists in an organization to the extent that members create new multiple forms of responsiveness in arenas where members are free to respectfully vocalize perceptions without restraint or fear of reprimand or censure." (Srivastva, et al., Executive Integrity, 297)

Inquiries on both the Technical Scholarship Program and the Quality - Productivity Center have come from Chambers across the nation, educational institutions and governmental agencies. These model programs are already being disseminated into other communities. The Director of the Mid-South Quality - Productivity Center is working actively in a five (5) county area in Eastern Arkansas to set up training for those seeking it. The Technical Scholarship Program staff has mailed informational literature and made on-site presentations at various educational institutions in and out of Tennessee.

CONCLUSION

Our experience in Memphis has been very beneficial from the standpoint of gaining entry into the higher levels of business organizations with substantive

issues that can be addressed within the educational domain. We have not opened a new door so much as having simply arrived at an equitable strategy that accommodates sound business protocol in opening the door at more opportune times. This affords a greater advantage to the educational community in maintaining contemporary curricula in specific technical programs at an appropriate level of relevancy while also introducing any new curricula that are required to meet new needs. For example, with the aging population in our society coupled with a concomitant reduction in the number of pharmacists graduating from colleges throughout the country, the business leaders of pharmacies in our community were asking over two years ago for the Community College to consider providing certified pharmacy technologists. Although this need would have become evident sooner or later, when the educational community actively participates with the business leadership, that kind of information is made available in a more expeditious and less encumbered way than is normally required. Consequently, response time is improved, less economic and social turbulence is realized and the public is better served.

The benefit is not restricted to education. Business not only gains more response to help meet its specific needs, but it gains a better entree to the educational community for participation in a broader array of general economic development activities. For example, in our city, Memphis State University has joined with The Chamber in a common market initiative that will help meet community and economic development needs within a 105 county area encompassing portions of five states in the mid-south. A considerable amount of research was being conducted through the University, but the joining of hands among business leaders in the common market with educational leaders enhanced the whole research effort. This kind of activity serves both business and education in many ways.

Partnerships between chambers of commerce and educational institutions are not totally unique. However, the degree to which business and education have combined resources to improve the quality of life and the economic and social well being of our citizenry is at a level well above that generally found across the country.

The key is not complex. Even though community

profiles will differ considerably from one area of the country to another, the opportunities for substantive partnerships between business and education - with emphasis on the institutions of higher learning - can be formed.

The key is more than just awareness. Obviously, the leadership in the community at large must be conscious of the potential benefits of the coordination of efforts, but awareness alone may not produce the desired results.

The key is commitment in both physical and human resources. There is a cost. We do not suggest to you that any substantive gains will be realized without paying a significant price, but we do suggest that the price paid will in all probability produce rewards far above the cost.

The merging of efforts between the Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce and State Technical Institute at Memphis took a specific route that upon initial investigation may appear to have been unique and possibly even coincidental to some degree. However, we suggest that in every community there are normally various duplications of effort among business and

educational organizations that would prove to be considerably more effective and efficient if appropriate partnerships were formed. Not every community has an area Chamber of Commerce or a technical college; but, most have some form of business organization that is representative of the common interest of the business leaders and access to some form of post-secondary education to help meet the education and training needs identified by that leadership.

Our challenge to each of you is to return to your homes as a representative of the business community or the educational community and begin to examine ways and means whereby viable partnerships can be formed that promote the common interest of both entities. The first step in this endeavor is to gain access to the leadership in each area and establish meaningful dialogue about the potential of partnerships that help serve the best interest of the entire community. Obviously this is often easier said than done. Strategies for developing entrees to the leadership may not be as difficult as we often think it will be. Typically a straightforward approach is the best.

Leaders in the business community do have a sincere interest in education, but are often intimidated by educators. Educators have an sincere interest in the business community but are frequently intimidated by high powered business leaders. Once the proverbial "ice" is broken, most experiences will be both positive and very rewarding for all concerned.

The representative business organization in your community (i.e., the Chamber or some other similar group), can serve as a forum to define the broad-based educational needs for the community. The post-secondary institution of learning can serve as a forum to translate those needs into practical educational programs. The post-secondary vocational educational institution needs a presence beyond its own individuality to enhance the business-education partnership. A strong presence to business leaders in their arena is needed to optimize the educational institution's services to those same businesses.

You hold the key to success whether you represent education or business. Cooperation among leaders in education and business enhances community development and promotes quality of life for its citizens. There

are risks. There are "turfdom" issues to be addressed.

In commenting on their ninth proposition in "Foundations for Executive Integrity," Srivastva and Barrett state " that...boundaries will be violated and turf trespassed on is inevitable in organizations. The issue is what do members do once the infringement happens." (Srivastva, et al., Op. Cit., 315)

There are questions of appropriateness of individuals participating in what some perceive to be purely academic issues and in what some perceive to be purely business issues. Trust among participants must be developed. Mutual respect must be established and maintained. Bridges can be built if the appropriate attitude for community development is demonstrated and if both groups recognize that a price must be paid. An adage we have all probably used goes something like this - There is a price to be paid for anything worth having. (Nothing is free!)

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